



32 CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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A computer implemented method comprising:

maintaining identification for a group of decision-making entities in a memory

device;

maintaining a setpoint representing a minimum cumulative support required to implement a proposed action;

communicating a query to the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein the query includes a description of the proposed action;

receiving query responses from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each response includes an indicator of support for the proposed action;

determining the cumulative support from the query responses received; and automatically implementing the proposed action if the cumulative support is greater than the setpoint

- 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising communicating messages to one or more of the decision-making entities.
- 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising communicating messages from one or more of the decision-making entities to at least one different decision-making entity.
- 25 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the indication of support is of a type selected from qualitative, quantitative, functional or a combination thereof.
 - 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of automatically implementing the decision includes transmitting an instruction to one or more trading networks.

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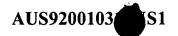


- 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising: imposing arbitration among the plurality of decision-making entities if the query responses provide cumulative support less than the minimum setpoint value.
- 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising: initiating an intra-group caucus between a plurality of the decision-making entities.
- 10 8. The method of claim 1, further comprising: receiving a request from one of the decision-making entities to initiate a query, wherein the request includes the proposed action.
- 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the query is formulated by one of the plurality of decision-making entities and transmitted to a central coordinator for subsequent 15 communication to the plurality of decision-making entities.
 - 10. The method of claim 9, wherein the setpoint is established by the decisionmaking entity that formulates the query.
 - 11. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of implementing the decision comprises transmitting an electronic communication to a third party.
- 12. The method of claim 1, wherein the identification of each decision-making entity includes a weighting factor, and wherein the step of determining the cumulative 25 support includes applying the weighting factor against each indicator of support for the decision.
 - The method of claim 5, further comprising: 13.

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sending a communication to each of the plurality of decision-making entities stating the amount of additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint.

- 14. The method of claim 1, wherein the query responses include weighting factors or other criteria relevant to the level of support.
- 15. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
 automatically communicating a second query to the plurality of decisionmaking entities if the additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint
 value is less than an second setpoint.
- 16. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

 querying one of the plurality of decision-making entities for authorization to implement the decision if the query responses provide cumulative support greater than the minimum setpoint.
- 17. The method of claim 1, further comprising: obtaining approval or denial to implement the decision.
- 20 18. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

 communicating the cumulative support to the plurality of decision-making entities;

formulating a second query based on this cumulative support;

receiving responses to the second query from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each of the second responses include a revised indication of support;

determining a revised cumulative support for the second query incorporating the revised indications of support; and

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implementing the decision if the revided cumulative support is greater than the minimum setpoint.

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19. A computer program product including instructions embodied on a computer readable medium, the instructions comprising:

maintaining instructions for maintaining identification for a group of decisionmaking entities in a memory device;

maintaining instructions for maintaining a setpoint representing a minimum cumulative support required to implement a proposed action;

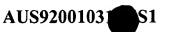
communicating instructions for communicating a query to the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein the query includes a description of the proposed action;

receiving instructions for receiving query responses from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each response includes an indicator of support for the proposed action;

determining instructions for determining the cumulative support from the query responses received; and

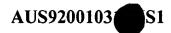
implementing instructions for automatically implementing the decision if the cumulative support is greater than the setpoint.

- 20. The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising communicating instructions for communicating messages to one or more of the decision-making entities.
- 25 21. The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising communicating instructions for communicating messages from one or more of the decision-making entities to at least one different decision-making entity.



- 22. The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising instructions for formulating a decision of a type selected from qualitative, quantitative functional or a combination of decisions thereof.
- 5 23. The computer program product of claim 19, wherein the implementing instructions include transmitting instruction for transmitting an instruction to one or more trading networks.
- 24. The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising:

 instructions imposing arbitration among the plurality of decision-making entities if the query responses provide cumulative support less than the minimum setpoint.
- 25. The of claim 19, further comprising
 caucusing instructions for initiating an intra-group caucus between a plurality
 of the decision-making entities.
- The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising:
 initiating instructions for allowing one of the decision-making entity to initiate
 a query.
 - 27. The computer program product of claim 26, further comprising:
 identifying instructions for identifying a query that is formulated by one of the
 plurality of decision-making entities; and
- transmitting instructions for transmitting the query to the plurality of decisionmaking entities.
 - 28. The computer program product of claim 27, further comprising.



identifying instructions for identifying a setpoint established by the decision-making entity that formulated the query.

- 29. The computer program product of claim 19, wherein implementing instructions for implementing the decision comprise transmitting instructions for transmitting an electronic communication to a third party.
- 30. The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising:

 maintaining instructions for maintaining a weighting factor for each of the

 decision-making entities; and
 applying instructions for applying the weighting factor for each of the decisionmaking entities against the indication of support received from the corresponding decision-making entity.
- 15 31. The computer program product of claim 24, further comprising:
 transmitting instructions for transmitting the amount of additional support
 necessary to reach the minimum setpoint value to each of the plurality of decisionmaking entities.
- 20 32. The computer program product of claim 19, wherein the indication of support provides a graduated level of support.
- The computer program product of claim 31, further comprising: transmitting instructions for automatically communicating a second query to
 the plurality of decision-making entities if the additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint is less than an second setpoint.
 - 34. The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising: generating instructions for generating a query to one of the plurality of

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decision-making entities for authorization to implement the decision if the query responses provide cumulative support greater than the minimum setpoint.

35. The computer program/product of claim 19, further comprising

transmitting instructions for communicating the cumulative response to the plurality of decision-making entities;

transmitting instructions for formulating a second query based on this cumulative response;

transmitting instructions for communicating second responses from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein the second responses comprise revised weighting factors;

transmitting instructions for determining the cumulative response to the second query incorporating the revised weighting factors;

implementing instructions for implementing the decision if the second query responses provide cumulative support greater than the minimum setpoint value.

- The method of claim 1, wherein one or more of the plurality of decision-making entities communicates through a personal digital assistant.
- 20 3.7. The method of claim 1, wherein the communications occur over a wireless network.
 - 38. The method of claim 1, wherein the communications utilize instant messaging.
 - The method of claim 1, further comprising:

 providing a collaboration manager to interface between decision-making entities having different computer platforms or applications.

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